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Hungerpiller et al.

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- (54) **SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR PROCESSING RETURNED MAIL** 5,420,403 A 5/1995 Allum et al.
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B07C 3/00 (2006.01)
B07C 3/18 (2006.01)
G06Q 10/00 (2006.01)
- (52) **U.S. Cl.** 705/401; 382/101
- (58) **Field of Classification Search** None
See application file for complete search history.

Primary Examiner—Lynne H Browne

(57) **ABSTRACT**

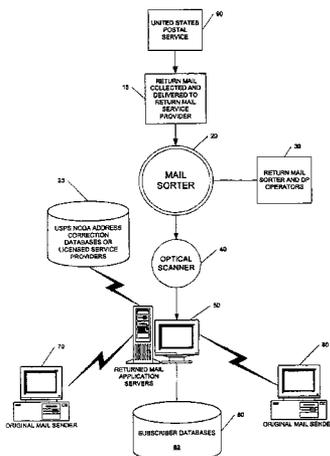
A method, system and program product for processing returned mail includes the steps of encoding pieces of mail with data including the identity of the intended recipient, mailing the pieces of mail to the intended recipients, collecting at a processing location those pieces of mail that are returned as undeliverable, scanning the data from the returned pieces of mail, electronically updating at least address information for the intended recipients of the returned mail, and electronically transmitting the updated address and other information to a subscriber for updating the subscriber's database of recipient addresses.

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At the time of issuance and publication of this certificate, the patent remains subject to pending reissue application number 11/605,488 filed Nov. 29, 2006. The claim content of the patent may be subsequently revised in the reissue processing.



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EX PARTE
REEXAMINATION CERTIFICATE
ISSUED UNDER 35 U.S.C. 307

THE PATENT IS HEREBY AMENDED AS
INDICATED BELOW.

Matter enclosed in heavy brackets [] appeared in the patent, but has been deleted and is no longer a part of the patent; matter printed in italics indicates additions made to the patent.

AS A RESULT OF REEXAMINATION, IT HAS BEEN DETERMINED THAT:

Claims 1-38 are cancelled.

New claims 39-63 are added and determined to be patentable.

39 *A method for processing returned mail items sent by a sender to an intended recipient, the method comprising:*

decoding, subsequent to mailing of the returned mail items, information indicating whether the sender wants a corrected address to be provided for the intended recipient, on at least one of the returned mail items;

obtaining an updated address of the intended recipient subsequent to determining that the sender wants a corrected address to be provided for the intended recipient; and

electronically transmitting an updated address of the intended recipient to a transferee, wherein the transferee is a return mail service provider.

40 *A computer program product residing on a computer readable medium comprising instructions for causing a computer to:*

store decoded information indicating whether a sender wants a corrected address to be provided and a customer number, each associated with at least one of a plurality of mail items returned subsequent to mailing as being undeliverable;

determining from the decoded data that the customer wants a corrected address to be provided for at least one of the plurality of undeliverable mail items;

receive an updated address of an intended recipient for at least one of the plurality of undeliverable mail items, subsequent to and based upon the determining step; and

transmit the updated address to a transferee, wherein the transferee is a return mail service provider.

41 *A system for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items comprising:*

a first detector, wherein the first detector detects, subsequent to mailing the undeliverable mail items, encoded information on at least one of the plurality of undeliverable mail items indicating whether a sender wants a corrected address to be provided for at least one of the undeliverable mail items; and

a processor that uses a computer program comprising instructions that cause the system to: i) decode the information indicating whether the sender wants a corrected address to be provided; ii) encode and decode intended recipient identification information; and iii) enable an updated address of an intended recipient to be sent to a transferee, wherein the transferee is a return mail service provider.

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42 *A method for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items, comprising:*

receiving from a sender a plurality of mail items, each including i) a written addressee, and ii) encoded data indicating whether the sender wants a corrected address to be provided for the addressee;

identifying, as undeliverable mail items, mail items of the plurality of mail items that are returned subsequent to mailing as undeliverable;

decoding the encoded data incorporated in at least one of the undeliverable mail items;

creating output data that includes a customer number of the sender and at least a portion of the decoded data;

determining if the sender wants a corrected address provided for intended recipients based on the decoded data;

if the sender wants a corrected address provided, electronically transferring to the sender information for the identified intended recipients that enable the sender to update the sender's mailing address files; and

if the sender does not want a corrected address provided, posting return mail data records on a network that is accessible to the sender to enable the sender to access the records.

43 *The method of claim 42, further comprising transmitting the name and address of the intended recipients to a mailing address service provider, subsequent to the determining step, in order to obtain an updated address for each intended recipient of an undeliverable mail item.*

44 *The method of claim 42, wherein the encoded data further indicates a name and address of the intended recipient.*

45 *The method of claim 42, wherein the plurality of mail items further include a written return address that is not that address of the sender.*

46 *A method for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items, comprising:*

receiving from a sender a plurality of mail items, each including i) a written addressee, and ii) encoded data indicating whether the sender wants a corrected address to be provided for the addressee;

identifying, as undeliverable mail items, mail items of the plurality of mail items that are returned subsequent to mailing as undeliverable;

decoding the encoded data incorporated in at least one of the undeliverable mail items;

creating output data that includes a customer number of the sender and at least a portion of the decoded data;

determining, based on the decoding step, if the sender wants a corrected address provided for intended recipients;

if the sender wants a corrected address provided, electronically transferring to the sender information for the identified intended recipients that enable the sender to update the sender's mailing address files, including a name change and a job change of intended recipients; and

if the sender does not want a corrected address provided, posting return mail data records on a network that is accessible to the sender to enable the sender to access the records.

47 *The method of claim 46, further comprising transmitting the name and address of the intended recipients to a mailing address service provider, subsequent to the determining step, in order to obtain an updated address for each intended recipient of an undeliverable mail item.*

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48. The method of claim 46, wherein the encoded data further indicates a name and address of the intended recipient.

49. The method of claim 46, wherein the plurality of mail items further include a written return address that is not that address of the sender.

50. A method for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items, comprising:

receiving from a sender a plurality of mail items, each including i) a written addressee, and ii) encoded data indicating whether the sender wants a corrected address to be provided for the addressee;

identifying, as undeliverable mail items, mail items of the plurality of mail items that are returned subsequent to mailing as undeliverable;

decoding the encoded data incorporated in at least one of the undeliverable mail items;

creating first output data that includes a customer number of the sender and at least a portion of the decoded data; sorting the first output data by customer number, after creating the first output data;

creating second output data for a customer number that includes the name and address of the intended recipients associated with the customer number, after the sorting step;

determining if the sender wants a corrected address provided for intended recipients;

if the sender wants a corrected address provided, electronically transferring to the sender information for the identified intended recipients that enable the sender to update the sender's mailing address files, including a name change and a job change of intended recipients; and

if the sender does not want a corrected address provided, posting return mail data records on a network that is accessible to the sender to enable the sender to access the records.

51. The method of claim 50, wherein the encoded data further indicates a name and address of the intended recipient.

52. The method of claim 50, wherein the plurality of mail items further include a written return address that is not that address of the sender.

53. The method of claim 50, further comprising transmitting the name and address of the intended recipients to a mailing address service provider in order to obtain an updated address for each intended recipient of an undeliverable mail item.

54. A method for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items, comprising:

receiving from a sender a plurality of mail items, each including i) a written addressee, and ii) encoded data indicating whether the sender wants a corrected address to be provided for the addressee;

identifying, as undeliverable mail items, mail items of the plurality of mail items that are returned subsequent to mailing as undeliverable;

decoding the encoded data incorporated in at least one of the undeliverable mail items;

creating first output data that includes a customer number of the sender and at least a portion of the decoded data; sorting the content of the first output data by customer number;

creating second output data that includes a customer number and the name and address of the intended

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recipients associated with the customer number, after the sorting step;

determining if the sender wants a corrected address provided for intended recipients based on the decoded data;

if the sender wants a corrected address provided, i) electronically transmitting the name and address of the intended recipient to an address correction service provider and receiving an updated address of the intended recipient from the address correction service provider; ii) electronically transferring to the sender, subsequent to receiving an updated address of the intended recipient from the address correction service provider, information for the identified recipients that enable the sender to update the sender's mailing address files; and if the sender does not want a corrected address provided, posting return mail data records on a network that is accessible to the sender to enable the sender to access the records.

55. The method of claim 54, wherein the encoded data further indicates a name and address of the intended recipient.

56. The method of claim 54, wherein the plurality of mail items further include a written return address that is not that address of the sender.

57. A method for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items, comprising:

receiving from a sender a plurality of mail items, each including i) a written addressee, and ii) encoded data indicating whether the sender wants a corrected address to be provided for the addressee;

identifying, as undeliverable mail items, mail items of the plurality of mail items that are returned subsequent to mailing as undeliverable;

decoding the encoded data incorporated in at least one of the undeliverable mail items;

creating first output data that includes a customer number of the sender and at least a portion of the decoded data including the name and address of the intended recipient;

sorting the content of the first output data by customer number;

creating second output data for a customer number that includes the name and address of the intended recipients associated with the customer number, after the sorting step;

determining if the sender wants a corrected address provided for intended recipients based on the decoded data;

if the sender wants a corrected address provided, i) electronically transmitting the name and address of the intended recipient to an address correction service provider and receiving an updated address of the intended recipient from the address correction service provider; and ii) electronically transferring to the sender, subsequent to receiving an updated address of the intended recipient from the address correction service provider, information for the identified intended recipients that enable the sender to update the sender's mailing address files; and

if the sender does not want a corrected address provided, posting return mail data records on a network that is accessible to the sender to enable the sender to access the records.

58. The method of claim 57, wherein the encoded data further indicates a name and address of the intended recipient.

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59. The method of claim 57, wherein the plurality of mail items further include a written return address that is not that address of the sender.

60. A system for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items, comprising:

a letter transport for receiving from a sender a plurality of undeliverable mail items that are returned subsequent to mailing as being undeliverable, each undeliverable mail item including i) a written addressee, and ii) encoded data indicating whether the sender wants a corrected address to be provided for the addressee;

a camera for decoding the encoded data incorporated in at least one of the undeliverable mail items; and

a computer for i) creating first output data that includes a customer number of the sender and at least a portion of the decoded data including the name and address of the intended recipient, iii) sorting the content of the first output data by customer number, after creating the first output data; ii) creating second output data for a customer number that includes the name and address of the intended recipients associated with the customer number, after the sorting the content of the output file by customer number; and iv) determining if the sender wants a corrected address provided for intended recipients based on the decoded data;

wherein the computer, upon determining that the sender wants a corrected address provided, i) electronically transmits the name and address of the intended recipient to an address correction service provider and receives an updated address of the intended recipient from the address correction service provider; and ii) electronically transfers to the sender, subsequent to receiving an updated address of the intended recipient from the address correction service provider, information for the identified intended recipients that enable the sender to update the sender's mailing address files; and

wherein the computer, upon determining that the sender does not want a corrected address provided, posts return mail data records on a network that is accessible to the sender to enable the sender to access the records.

61. The method of claim 60, wherein the encoded data further indicates a name and address of the intended recipient.

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62. The method of claim 60, wherein the plurality of mail items further include a written return address that is not that address of the sender.

63. A system for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items, comprising:

a hand-held barcode optical scanner for decoding encoded data on undeliverable mail items that are returned subsequent to mailing as being undeliverable, the encoded data indicating whether a sender wants a corrected address to be provided for the addressee incorporated, wherein each undeliverable mail item also includes a written addressee; and

a computer for i) creating first output data that includes a customer number of the sender and at least a portion of the decoded data including the name and address of the intended recipient; ii) sorting the content of the first output data by customer number, after creating the first output data; iii) creating second output data for a customer number that includes the name and address of the intended recipients associated with the customer number, after the sorting the content of the output file by customer number; and iv) determining if the sender wants a corrected address provided for intended recipients based on the decoded data;

wherein the computer, upon determining that the sender wants a corrected address provided, i) electronically transmits the name and address of the intended recipient to an address correction service provider and receives an updated address of the intended recipient from the address correction service provider; and ii) electronically transfers to the sender, subsequent to receiving an updated address of the intended recipient from the address correction service provider, information for the identified intended recipients that enable the sender to update the sender's mailing address files; and

wherein the computer, upon determining that the sender does not want a corrected address provided, posts return mail data records on a network that is accessible to the sender to enable the sender to access the records.

* * * * *